

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PHNOM 00398 071242Z

51

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGR-05 IGA-01 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00

EB-07 FRB-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-02

OPIC-03 SP-02 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 DODE-00

L-02 /054 W

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P R 071145Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8828

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

INFO COMUSMACTHAI

COMUSSAG LG

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 398

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, MILI, TH, CB

REF: STATE 002284

1. WHILE EMBASSY BANGKOK IS IN BEST POSITION TO COMMENT ON RTG RELUCTANCE TO CLEAR U.S. RICE FOR AIRDROPS INTO CAMBODIA, WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO COMMENT ON OTHER ASPECTS OF THE RICE SUPPLY PROBLEM.

2. AS DEPT MAY RECALL, SUPPLY OF RICE FOR AIRDROPS WAS FIRST PURCHASED FROM THAILAND UNDER 614 WAIVER AUTHORITY THAT EXISTED FOR CAMBODIA AT THAT TIME. WHEN WAIVER AUTHORITY WAS WITHDRAWN, DUE TO U.S. SURPLUS RICE SITUATION, ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE IN APRIL 1974 TO TRUCK BATTAMBANG RICE TO SAMAE SAN. THIS ARRANGEMENT WAS CONTINUED FOR TWO MONTHS BUT PROVED UNSATISFACTORY AS TRUCK CONVOYS COULD NOT SUPPLY ENOUGH RICE TO MEET AIRDROP DEMANDS, COORDINATION WAS DIFFICULT AND THAI TRUCKING RATES EXCESSIVE.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PHNOM 00398 071242Z

3. SINCE JUNE 1974 SAMAE SAN HAS BEEN SUPPLIED BY BARGE WITH

PL 480 RICE FROM KOMPONG SOM AND SAIGON. TWO SHIPMENTS WERE CLEARED WITHOUT DIFFICULTY AND THE SYSTEM APPEARED TO BE WORKING WELL UNTIL THE RTG BELATEDLY DISCOVERED ONE OF ITS REGULATIONS WHICH APPARENTLY PROHIBITS IMPORTATION OF RICE INTO THAILAND. THE THIRD AND LAST SHIPMENT OF RICE WAS CLEARED RELUCTANTLY BY THE RTG IN NOVEMBER; AND SINCE THAT TIME THE RTG HAS REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO GRANT FURTHER CLEARANCE.

4. WE HAVE EXPLORED OTHER AVENUES OF APPROACH:

A. 614 WAIVER TO PURCHASE RICE IN THAILAND-AS DEPT HAS POINTED OUT THIS OPTION IS EXTREMELY UNLIKELY IN LIGHT OF U.S. RICE POSITION.

B. PURCHASE BY GKR- THE GKR DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH FOREIGN EXCHANGE AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE RICE FOR AIRDROPS FROM THAILAND AND EVEN IF IT HAD ENOUGH CASH WOULD PROBABLY INCUR THE WRATH OF CONGRESS IF IT WERE TO PURCHASE RICE FROM OTHER THAN THE U.S.

C. AIRDROPS SUPPLIED FROM WITHIN COUNTRY-THIS PROPOSAL WAS EXAMINED EXTENSIVELY BOTH FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE BIRD CONTRACT AND KAF FLYING AIRDROPS OUT OF BATTAMBANG OR PHNOM PENH. NEITHER APPROACH IS CONSIDERED FEASIBLE DUE TO LACK OF RICE IN BATTAMBANG, LACK OF RAMP SPACE IN PHNOM PENH, LACK OF PRESENT CAPABILITY ON THE PART OF KAF, AND NECESSITY IN THE CASE OF BIRD CONTRACT TO BRING IN UP TO FOUR RIGGING INSPECTORS UNDER LEGISLATIVE CEILING.

D. TRUCKING RICE OUT OF BATTAMBANG- AS POINTED OUT PREVIOUSLY THIS APPROACH WAS ONCE TRIED BUT PROVED UNSUCCESSFUL. AN ADDITIONAL FACTOR THAT WAS NOT INVOLVED EARLIER IS THAT THE SUPPLY OF BATTAMBANG RICE THIS YEAR WILL MOST LIKELY ONLY BE SUFFICIENT FOR THE BATTAMBANG POPULATION, FANK TROOPS IN THE AREA AND IMMEDIATE REFUGEE NEEDS. ANY RICE EXPORTED OUT OF BATTAMBANG THIS YEAR MAY WELL MAKE THE REGION DEFICIT. IN ANY EVENT WE WOULD ASSUME THAT THE RTG WOULD NOT SELECTIVELY APPLY THEIR REGULATIONS TO PERMIT TRANSIT OF BATTAMBANG RICE WHILE REFUSING ENTRY OF U.S. RICE.

5. IN CONCLUSION WE SEE NO VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO SUPPLYING SAMAE SAN WITH PL 480 RICE. AS WE HAVE POINTED OUT PREVIOUSLY (AND REPORTEDLY SOME RTG OFFICIALS ACKNOWLEDGE) THE PL 480 RICE IN QUESTION IS ONLY TRANSITING THAILAND AND SHOULD NOT BE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PHNOM 00398 071242Z

CONSIDERED AS AN IMPORT FOR THE PURPOSES OF RTG LAWS.

6. WE WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT COMMENTS.
DEAN

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